

DAY TO DAY PAMPHLETS  
No. 22

THE ROOTS OF  
VIOLENCE

Merttens Lecture, 1934

S. K. RATCLIFFE



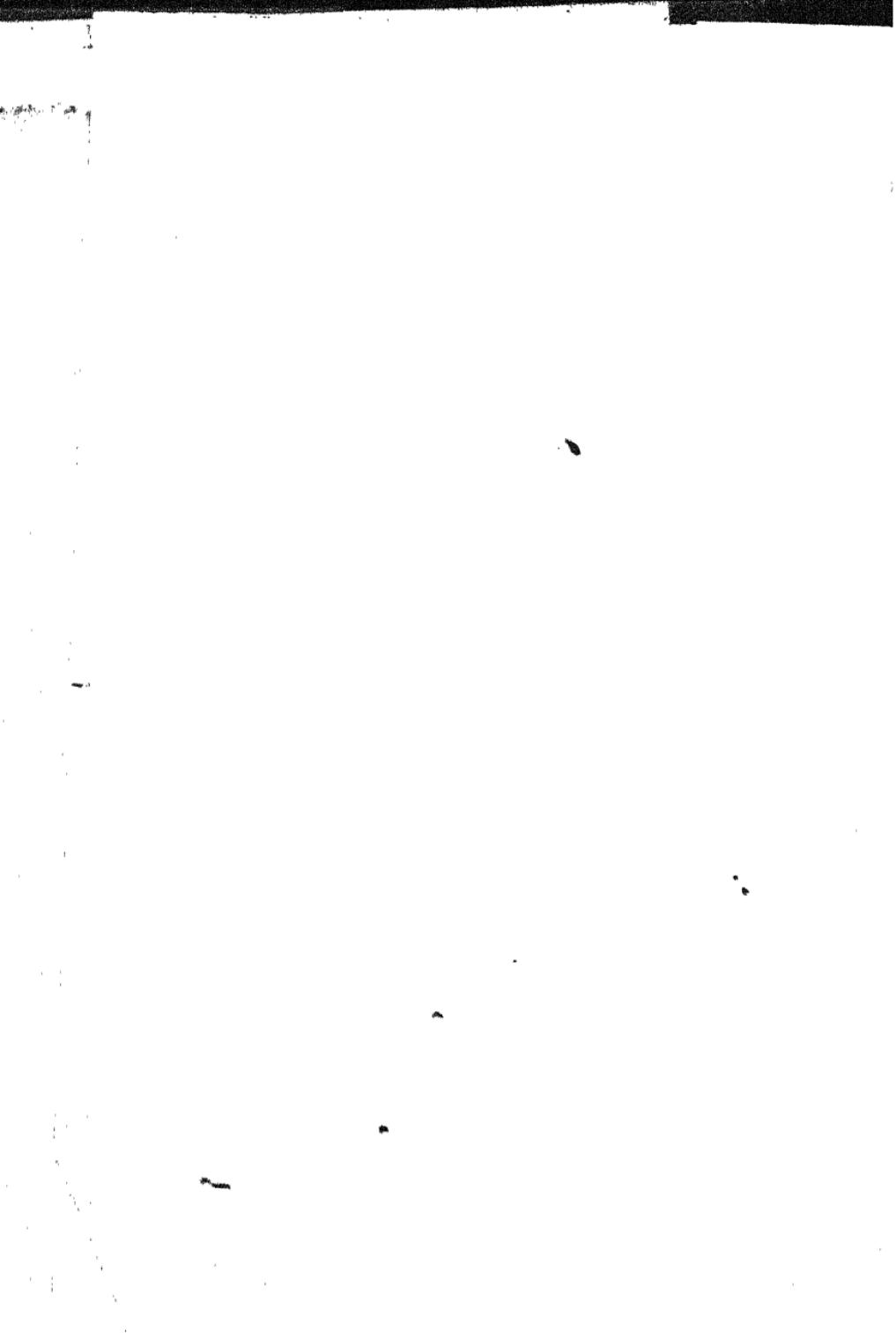
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Merttens Lecture, 1934

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## PREFATORY NOTE

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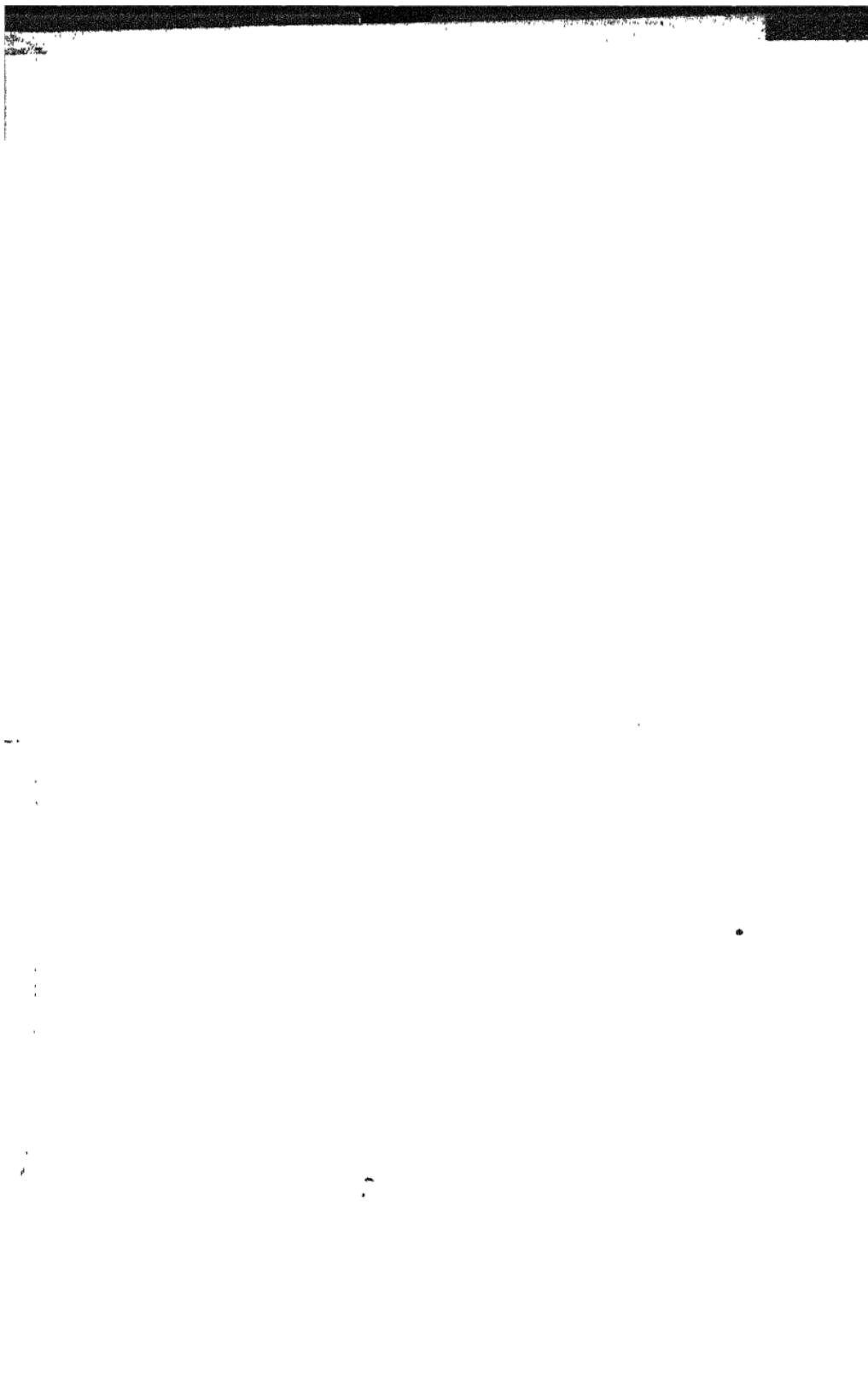
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## THE ROOTS OF VIOLENCE

AT this point of time, fifteen years after the Treaty signed at Versailles, the most conspicuous fact of Europe is the Return of Violence. Over some three-fourths of the Continent methods of violence have been re-established in government; and we should perhaps not be mistaken if we were to conjecture that were the existing despotisms overthrown they would be replaced by Governments no less dependent upon force and the organized stamping-out of opposition. The reaction in political and administrative authority finds its counterpart in social affairs. The generation which ended in 1914 took for granted, roughly speaking, the victory of tolerance, of liberal thought and feeling. The movement of the nineteenth century was believed to be towards the enthronement in society of the principle of consent, the method of discussion and conciliation. This assumption was a commonplace. Our habit was to think of the tendency as becoming, in the civilized world, universal. But the events of the past decade and the altered attitude of masses of mankind toward them compel us to realize that we have been making the grave mistake of taking our spiritual and social heritage too lightly, of underestimating or overlooking the existence of evil forces which the agencies of civilization have done little to remove.

The Return of Violence represents a change of great rapidity, and its phenomena are as unmistakable as those of 1789 or 1848. The Bolshevik triumph of 1917 and the Fascist March on Rome five years later are the pivotal events of modern revolution and counter-revolution. The first was, and remains, a unique occurrence: no Western nation has repeated the experience of Soviet Russia. The example of Mussolini, on the contrary, has proved to be an extraordinary stimulant. Fascismo is breaking through many frontiers. Its spirit is contagious; its technique can too easily be copied; its details tend to be reproduced even among peoples that hitherto have taken pains to emphasize their distance, alike in politics and in social ethics, from the Mediterranean. Herr Hitler and his followers affirm that National Socialism is not Fascism, and we should do well to keep in mind the important differences between the two systems. But we are here concerned with them and with Russian State Communism as moulds of contemporary despotism. In certain features they are almost identical. They are fatal to personal and group liberty. They announce their tenets as revelation, as dogmas to be accepted; and they rely, without disguise or apology, upon force as the ruling method—force coupled, when necessary, with terrorism. Nothing, said Lenin, is to be achieved except by violence. The younger dictators adopt and apply the saying. Or—if one may amend a once-famous Gladstonian phrase—they have elevated violence into a principle of government.

#### AN UNFORESEEN TRAGEDY

Now, the first thing to be said about this development, which we may place specifically within the past twelve years, is that it was virtually unforeseen. After the European system was riven in 1914 we lived amid clouds of prophecy as to the results of the conflict and the nature of the world that was to emerge from it. But I cannot remember that any one of our public guides, so fruitful in prediction and often so convincing, foresaw the eclipse of democracy in Europe, the widespread destruction of representative institutions, and the advent of the dictators. Large, and even fundamental, changes in government and society were of course anticipated on all sides. It was assumed, for instance, that a European upheaval must hasten the end of the autocratic imperial systems, that thrones would fall and the royal families be scattered. When, as the war drew to a close, these things were happening from day to day there seemed to be little occasion for surprise, and the Press was too closely concerned with the fate of armies to find headlines for the departing sovereigns. It was not believed in any quarter, so far as I can recall, that the kings would give way to dictators, while in the first years after the war a prediction to the effect that, in one country after another, supreme power would be wielded by a man coming from the common people, so sure of himself that he could treat monarchy or parliament as an irrelevance, would have sounded fantastic.

I believe I am right in saying that, apart from the strict Marxists, political or professional, whose formula is unvarying and of universal application,

the forecasts were all running the other way. It was believed that the war, whatever its end in terms of victory and defeat, must work out towards the completion of popular government. The spokesmen of the warring countries were using to the limit the watchwords of democracy and free nationality. It is permissible to doubt whether most of them believed in these watchwords, which were found to be of such high value in 1917-18, any more than the monarchs and statesmen of the Holy Alliance believed in the manifestos they issued against Napoleon. But it is undeniable that the peoples of the English-speaking lands were in general convinced that they stood for unavoidable results of the world upheaval. There can hardly have been a public man in Europe, after 1917, who retained belief in the restoration of the old European system, or anything resembling it. German war-time memoirs have revealed a consciousness of the deeper defeat, and it was recognized in England that the coming of the first powerful appeal for a negotiated peace from the aristocracy implied, among other things, the knowledge that a protracted conflict could not but be fatal to the privileged orders. The war, too, had become a war of nations. The enormous sufferings and sacrifices in which the peoples had shared encouraged the belief that, whatever the immediate result in the shape of an imposed peace, the ultimate outcome would be a victory for progressive principles, an expanding liberation. Moreover, considered in terms of government as the Peace Conference assembled, Europe seemed to afford abundant evidence of change in this

direction. The militarist empires had crumbled. The monarchs had fled. Europe was a continent of new and hopeful republics. For those who might claim to have an instructed view of Governments and European affairs after fifty months of war, it was hardly possible to look for the making of a good peace, a treaty that would embody that framework for a new Europe which was being so continuously proclaimed as the desire of the soldiers and the peoples to whom they belonged. But none the less was it believed that the wider liberation must soon come within hail.

#### HOPES OF DEMOCRACY

The expectation of a world victory for free government had been increasingly held during the quarter-century before the war. The advance of constitutionalism, of political democracy, was everywhere to be observed. All European countries, including even Tsarist Russia, had adopted representative systems. Constitutional monarchies were becoming indistinguishable from crowned republics, and our people noted, not without satisfaction, that the British Parliament and Cabinet were the accepted models. Nor was the progress of democracy by any means confined to Europe. The twenty countries of Latin America were as near to republican democracy as the United States. Every country of Asia that was moving into the modern world had started by adopting representative institutions. The Indian political movement, it is true, was later to be split asunder by the most remarkable crusade of an anti-political nature known to the modern world—

Mr. Gandhi's non-co-operation and civil disobedience. But the disruptive idea of that crusade did not materially alter the political creed of the Nationalist leaders, even of those who gave up their political activities in order to work in the Gandhist cause. The draft of the Nehru Committee's Constitution ten years ago was based upon a scheme of representation which, in its numerical strictness, would have satisfied the disciples of Bentham, while later still the confused debates over the Round Table Constitution were to show once again how strong is the hold of constitutional theory and representative methods upon the Indian mind. In 1934 the revived National Congress is demanding a constituent assembly, based upon universal suffrage.

There can be no doubt that the overthrow of the Central Powers by an alliance of parliamentary democracies, together with the transformation of Imperial Germany by the Weimar Constitution, had a powerful influence in shaping the expectation of a democratic world after the Peace. And it must be acknowledged that there was little in Continental Socialism after the age of Bismarck, to encourage the view that representative institutions were in danger of destruction. Social Democracy was parliamentary. Its leaders in Germany and elsewhere were for the most part parliamentary orators. The British Labour Party moved towards its governing position without giving any hint of deviation from the constitutional path. The Guild Socialists, who enjoyed a brief day of promise before 1914, devised a national organization of industry which was to run

parallel with the political system and to be in no sense inimical to the constitutional State. When at the close of the War the Labour Party adopted Mr. Sidney Webb's inspired pamphlet, *Labour and the New Social Order*, and thereby caught the imagination of the younger progressives in every land, no Socialist leaders in England were thinking about new forms of the coercive State; nor, rather curiously, as Soviet Russia passed from the New Economic Policy, that bold compromise of Lenin's last stage, to Stalin and the Five Years' Plan, did the Left Wing of British Labour make any movement towards the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no lack of further examples. I will take only one—the striking case of Mr. Bernard Shaw. Always an advocate of social discipline and strong government, Mr. Shaw in his vigorous elderhood has repudiated democracy with a fierceness of statement and epithet equal to the strongest of the philippics that he launched against capitalism during his prime. But so late as 1928, when he turned away from unpersuadable mankind and made his plea for Socialism to the Intelligent Woman, he built that memorable treatise upon an argument for a constitutional system and the continued powers of Parliament—notwithstanding the glaring difficulty of reconciling a programme of Socialist equality with the character of the parliamentary instrument as known to the British electorate.

#### THE WILSONIAN VIEW

So far I have been speaking only of the political aspect of the democratic advance. But, as we know,

this was the reflection of a general and many-sided movement in social organization. At the beginning of the century England was, in respect of certain community services, behind the most progressive of European countries; but, starting late, our country made noteworthy strides during the short space of a few years, so that, at the least, we were able to draw an encouraging contrast—as regards such matters as public health and child welfare, provision for the aged and the unemployed—between the England of 1910 and the England of the Victorian jubilee. To say these things is not, of course, to say that Britain before or after the War had succeeded in entering upon any radical reconstruction of the national system for the achievement of social justice and a minimum standard of life. Notoriously, the contrary was the case. But we had established and grown accustomed to a general amelioration of conditions, and had moved in the direction of a system of taxation which was clearly aimed at an actual redistribution of the national income. The programme of social democracy was far from being approached; indeed, the vigour of the protests from various sections of the Left Wing was sufficient evidence of discontent. But it was manifest that the movement of political democracy went along with an advance towards a more humane organization of the community life, a continually growing acceptance of the principles of consent and co-operation.

So much' was true of Britain. We should not be justified in saying that the United States was making a corresponding advance, since the vast

area of the Republic and its federal system create difficulties on a scale unknown to Britain; but in America, at any rate before the European catastrophe, there prevailed a remarkable spirit of social activity and experiment, which gave rise, throughout the North and West, to an abounding confidence of outlook. It may therefore, be appropriate, in this connection, to quote the American statesman who was shortly to become the most eminent Liberal of his time. Woodrow Wilson had a gift for condensing into memorable sentences the best hopes of his contemporaries. It was on June 5th, 1914, two months only before the armies of Europe began to march, that the President said:

The new things in the world are the things that are divorced from force. They are the moral compulsions of the human conscience. No man can turn away from these things without turning away from the hope of all the world.

Woodrow Wilson was right. Or, to put it less emphatically, he was giving expression to a belief that was held by an immense majority of men and women in the Western world. They could not be aware of the forces then being organized for the destruction of Europe. Nor could the most prescient among them have conceived it as possible that within three short years of this utterance the same democratic ruler would be urging upon the American people the employment of force as the only means of ending an intolerable world calamity, and "force without stint or limit."

But force does not bring release from calamity. War cannot end war. The peace was lost. The treaties of vengeance brought additional disasters; and Europe, after fifteen years of suffering which, so far as we are able to judge, is greater far in sum than the suffering that followed the overthrow of Napoleon, lies under systems of despotic rule the forms of which provide for us the harshest and the most perplexing challenge.

#### THE INTERNATIONAL ROOTS

The least difficult points for us to deal with are those relating to the international aspects of our problem. The European countries at present suffering most severely under the reign of violence are the Central Powers, chief victims of the Carthaginian peace. The question of Germany after 1918, Mr. H. G. Wells has said, ought to have been the major concern of all European statesmen. If Germany had gone right, all must have gone right. There are few statements to be made concerning post-war Europe that we should expect to meet with a larger measure of agreement than this one. A good many years have passed since the majority came to suspect, if not to perceive, the truth that was clear to the minority from the beginning—namely, that the essential choice before the victorious Powers was the choice between vengeance and peace. Penalties for war-guilt can never be allotted; vengeance defeats itself. But was there a possibility, amid the dreadful conditions of 1919, that the Paris Conference could be directed towards a peace of healing? We know, unhappily, that there was not. Triumph

had not brought the sense of security, although the material victory went beyond anything in European annals since the fall of Rome, and although the defeated nations had been thrust down to a depth beyond the experience of a great European people in any age. Fear remained predominant: fear and the passion for revenge; and the politics of Power for which the governments stood were embodied first in the treaties and later in the successive reparations plans.

It is especially in times of constantly recurring crisis such as the present that we are conscious of hearing wisdom after the event. Our generation has reason enough for guarding itself against this weakness, and yet it cannot be quite useless for us to remember how large a part of the European peril that confronts us to-day was foreseen. The dark significance of Versailles was not hidden from the heads of the Peace Conference. The Press of the world was full of warnings during the interval between the presentation of the Treaty and that day of grim tragedy upon which were appended the signatures of German delegates who, while sacrificing themselves, knew that they could not claim to represent a republican Reich which as yet was not actually in being. And no warnings were ever plainer or less coloured by political partisanship. In England, for instance, some of the most impressive came from Conservative publicists who had identified themselves with the policy of absolute victory. In America the protests against President Wilson's part in the treaty were many and precise.

### WISDOM IN TREATIES

If history has definite lessons to teach, we seem driven to admit that they are almost never learned. Compare the Treaty of Versailles with the two outstanding settlements of the past in which France was the beaten power. When Europe was being rearranged after Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington pressed continually for the modification of harsh provisions, arguing at every stage that the one thing for the Allies to keep in view was the shaping of terms which the French people, after its experience of Napoleon, would be ready to fulfil. And in 1713 at Utrecht, as the distinguished historian of England under Anne has reminded us in a weighty preface, Bolingbroke on behalf of England adopted a course which was the opposite of that followed two centuries later at Versailles. Mr. Lloyd George negotiated with his Allies and dictated terms to the enemy. Bolingbroke, says Professor Trevelyan, displayed on behalf of the Government of Queen Anne a higher wisdom in negotiating with the enemy and employing the power of England to impose peace upon his Allies. Nor was Mr. Lloyd George unprovided with a caution from the later history of European treaties. In one of his war-time speeches he recalled a decision which carried an unmistakable moral for himself as first delegate of Britain. The German imperialists, he pointed out, had at the close of the Franco-Prussian War committed the grave blunder of dictating terms to the French such as might have been defensible if the war had left the Second Empire standing, but not otherwise.

The Empire had fallen; peace had to be made with the French Republic, and the first genuine chance for an international bridging of the Rhine might have been taken.

A far more impressive opportunity than that of 1871 was rejected in 1919 and destroyed by the Treaty. And if, as the whole world seems now to be agreed, the first great evil was wrought at Versailles, we can have no doubt as to the second. It lies in the punitive policy maintained against the German Republic in defiance of the principles of policy and action for which the leaders of the allied nations had stood. Among the innumerable things said about Nazi Germany in the eighteen months since Adolf Hitler came to power, there is one that probably sounds more convincing to the majority of reasonable people than any other. It is that between Hitler as the ruler of Germany and the Versailles treaty there is a line of cause and effect as straight as any line in human affairs can be.

#### THE DISTRESSFUL REPUBLIC

The German Republic, we can now perceive, was a foredoomed experiment. Born in defeat and confusion, and struggling throughout against difficulties which might well have proved fatal to a government created by and for a united people, the Weimar Constitution lasted for thirteen years. The wonder is that it did not succumb in three. It was hammered out in the year of the Peace Conference; that is, at a time when the most thoroughly political nation in the world could not in Germany's position have carried out a task of

constitution-making. In such conditions how was this Republic to be provided with a workable basis? Its supporters at every stage were in a minority, while its enemies within Germany included most of the influential and all the fanatical groups. The Social Democrats and their uncertain allies have been subjected to severe condemnation, especially from English and American critics, because the revolution they made in the year of humiliation was so incomplete an affair, and because in particular the first republican Government left the officials of the old régime in their places and made no attempt to create and establish their own body of public servants. A partial answer to this criticism is not difficult to give. The German people are profoundly anti-revolutionary. At the end of the War they were desperate for peace and food. Their political feeling was summed up in a passionate desire to have done with the old system, and to prevent a restoration of the imperial family. A people (as Spengler cruelly reminds them) less used to self-rule than any people west of Russia, they had witnessed the collapse of the best-organized Government in the world. There was, obviously, no practicable means of improvising a republican personnel. They were still blockaded, and were slowly coming to realize the full wretchedness of being the outcast nation. Their political parties were in utter confusion, and they suffered from a pitiful lack of competent and disinterested leadership. It is probably true that no great country of the modern world has made a more lamentable display in its internal

affairs than Germany made during the five years between the treaty and the Dawes Plan. The revelation is to be found in the personal records of the time, and in virtually all of them: in the Life of Rathenau as in the Memoirs of Stresemann, or in the picture drawn by Ernst Toller of the left-wing parties lost in their pettiness and hysteria. Nothing of the chaos and the collective sickness is hidden.

I would point out, however, that the picture thus drawn, and so deplorable when judged by alien political tests, has a very different appearance when it is considered in relation to the German people themselves, the essential German character, and the practical achievement of the nation. The German Republic may have been politically as corrupt and inefficient as its enemies, within and without, have asserted. But we have to remember that it was under the Weimar Constitution, and in the hardest years of the Republic, that the great restoration was accomplished. There has not been within the past century a national achievement to set beside this. Germany in 1919 was sunk more deeply than any great modern country has been. She was beaten down, ruined, and subject to a hideous reprobation. During the period of eight years marked at the end by her admission to the League of Nations, Germany had rebuilt her industries and her civic life, had overcome to a great extent the destructive influences in the national character, and by persistence in the policy of treaty fulfilment (afterwards so bitterly repudiated) had regained in great degree her international standing.

#### MAKING WAY FOR HITLER

It is the evidence of that self-restoration that affords the strongest basis for an indictment of the policy pursued by the victor Powers. The German statesmen who stood by the policy of fulfilment were required to argue that their efforts would bring reward in the end. Theirs was a very hard task. The Dawes Plan gave way to the Young Plan, offering no relief in the burden of reparations. It was impossible in those years for a policy of treaty revision to be mentioned. Compulsory disarmament within a ring of Powers armed more formidably than before 1914 was felt as an intolerable state of bondage; and when the claim to equality in armament was formally conceded, it was at a time when the German people were coming to a realization that the Disarmament Conference could not succeed because the Powers had no intention of fulfilling the positive obligation contained in the disarmament clauses of the treaty that was altogether their own handiwork.

Was it possible, then, amid the conditions the economic collapse of 1929-31, for the German Republic to have been saved? The broad answer to that question would seem to be in two parts. First, the disruptive forces within Germany gathered enormous strength after the suspension of the American loans and the death of Stresemann. Propaganda of a systematic and ruthless kind had done its work. A complete denial of war-guilt had become the new orthodoxy. Liberals and Pacifists, Socialists and Communists were grouped together in respect of the

"shameful treaty" and "the stab in the back" of 1918. The Republic was identified with defeat and with the continued humiliation of Germany.

The second part of the answer is concerned with the position of Germany among the Powers. Fulfilment and restoration would mean, of course, that Germany must again be strong. There could then be no refusal of equality and it would not be in arms alone. However the problem of armaments might eventually be settled, treaty revision must quickly become a practical question. President Roosevelt said recently that nine-tenths of the people in the world could be described as on the whole content with the boundaries within which they are living. The percentage is demonstrably too large, although Mr. Roosevelt was probably not mistaken in suggesting that there are more galling injustices than those defined by frontiers. Here, however, is a question which France and the Little Entente, to say nothing of Italy, are resolved not to have opened. Great Britain cannot touch it: revision is a continental problem. This means, in sum, that the policy of the Powers continued to be an anti-German policy, and the growing knowledge of that fact told steadily with Germans against the Republic and the political parties. Germany, that is to say, was a frustrate Republic. Had it been accorded reasonable support from outside it might have been established. That support was not forthcoming. The Republic fell, and its disappearance marks the point at which the German and the non-German fail completely as a rule to understand one another. The sympathetic foreigner

points out that it was the Republic which brought the country back, restored the national life, made Germany again respected, and was winning the goodwill of the world, whereas the Nazis began by destroying Germany's international position and speedily made an end of Germany's friends in Europe and America. And to that the young German replies: "But the successes you mention did nothing for us. The more our statesmen conceded the less they gained. If you say that we were making friends, our answer is that we could not see them. And now we must stand by ourselves. Strength alone will gain anything for the German nation. And the Powers that would not be fair to Republican Germany will know that Nazi Germany cannot be denied."

#### THE VANISHED EUROPE

In the sphere of authority the origins of the new violence are not obscure. The old European system was anything but stable. Its greatest Governments could not be said to have their foundations in organic reality. Its statesmen and diplomatists based all their activities upon the belief or knowledge that the continental structure was unnatural and without internal strength. The alliances and the huge mechanism of defence proclaimed this consciousness of peril. And there were a few areas, vital on account of their geographical position, which existed in a chronic condition of warfare.

All this is true; but on the other hand we must recognize that, in view of the fact that the Great Powers had kept the peace among themselves for forty years, the system had an appearance of

might and endurance which set up in the common European mind the illusion of full security. The great Governments looked marvellously strong. Their administrative organizations had a degree of efficient functioning which could not be called in question. The economic and cultural systems behind them made a corresponding impression of permanence and necessity. Young men and women throughout the great half-century of affluence and expansion grew up in a world that was to them inevitable and immovable. They had no consciousness of danger. There was nothing in their universe which admitted of any doubt as to its weight and finality. Had they been able to imagine a serious overturn, it must in their vision have seemed like the heavens being rolled up as a scroll.

Now our good fortune as islanders makes us very nearly incapable of putting ourselves in the place of any one of the European nations or local communities which, after the crash of 1914 or since the peacemaking, has lived through the horror of chaos. And yet all the larger facts are before us, and three at least of these are obvious. The great initial circumstance is the destruction of the State systems, especially the three historic empires, which meant the breakdown of European government. The second, I suggest, is the disappearance, by flight or by "liquidation" (to use the sinister Russian term), of the ruling orders, which, we may reflect, were to the European peoples in general the most ancient and enduring of institutions. Monarchies are made and unmade; all through the nineteenth century this process was one of general

familiarity. The royal families, with their unreal small-scale background of Central European principalities, could make no showing of permanence in themselves. But the aristocracies were another matter altogether. They bore a character of secular endurance; and how amazingly was their long day brought to a close! As a third conspicuous fact, we have the disappearance of political democracy, so called, in all the countries of Europe which were without a parliamentary tradition, sturdily built up and managed with common sense. The fall of thrones, the expropriation of the privileged orders, the overturning of representative government—these together meant the ruin of the European system, the end of an age. The walls collapse, the guardians are removed, the sanctions dissolve. And in the national dwelling-houses where an incomplete or frustrated revolution has started a whirl of sweeping and garnishing, the seven devils of anarchy or of despotism take up their abode. And then, the swift passage of a few years brings about an altered balance between the generations. Very soon there are no men and women on the morning side of middle age who have had the experience of living, of learning and working, under the influences of settled government and accepted authority. Indigence and hopelessness and lawlessness are no longer strange: they make the only condition known to the mass.

#### PROPHETS OF VIOLENCE

The age of the despots returns, and, as always in the past, their intellectual apologists

are at hand. Germany continues to produce the most emphatic and consistent apostles of force. There is no need for us to quote the Professor Banses and their kind. They are representative of what Theodore Roosevelt called the lunatic fringe, and that fringe in England and America is no less deplorable than in Central Europe. Germany, however—and I do not see how this statement is to be challenged—is always provided with philosophic defenders of extreme doctrines. At the present time there is none, perhaps, more influential than Oswald Spengler, who cannot be dismissed as of no account, since he is the author of *The Decline of the West*, a book which is important for other reasons than the obvious one that educated Germany in defeat accepted all its disheartening conclusions. Dr. Spengler\* is still convinced that European civilization is plunging towards its final doom: its agony is “the precondition for future crises which must one day set in with crushing force.” For him the power of the State is the one binding force. The end of a State is chaos if it follows the road of democracy and representative government; “a modern republic is nothing but the ruin of a monarchy that has given itself up”—which is at any rate a not inaccurate description of Germany during the Weimar interval. A people cannot govern itself: it must be commanded like an army, and so long as a nation possesses healthy instincts it will beg to be governed—once more a purely German generalization. The half-century of peace between 1871 and 1914, says Spengler,

\* *The Hour of Decision*. By Oswald Spengler.

made the European peoples "self-satisfied, covetous, void of understanding, and incapable of bearing misfortune." The present is the greatest age of Europe, yet "all the more diminutive are the people in it." They are town-dwellers, "cut off from the soil and the natural experience of destiny, time and death." And meanwhile, Dr. Spengler adds, "the everlasting youths" are with us, "immature, destitute of the slightest experience, or even desire for experience," but "fired by uniforms and badges and clinging fantastically to some theory or other." The author of *The Hour of Decision* assures us that he approves wholly of what the Hitler Government has done, but the descriptive touch in the sentence last quoted is hardly of the kind to please the director of Nazi propaganda. The crushing depression of our time, Dr. Spengler asserts, "is purely and simply the result of the decline of the State." The restoration of State power is, therefore, the most urgent necessity, and the present task of Europe is the restoration of Cæsarism. The rule of the Cæsars is the one right rule, for "man is a beast of prey" and conflict is "the original fact of life."

#### THOMAS CARLYLE, FASCIST

In England, needless to say, we have had no Spengler. But let us not fall into the mistake of thinking that we are without any prophets of equal or superior rank whose voice has been raised for Cæsarism. The present generation has almost forgotten Thomas Carlyle. It is important that we should remember him. Since the fall of Imperial Germany we have had many reminders of the

services rendered by Carlyle to the Hohenzollerns, through the History of Frederick the Great, which some among us would describe as the most astounding piece of English historical writing in its century. For Carlyle's English public it marked the fulness of his identification of Right with Might. For us to-day, however, the book that gives the most renowned English author of the Victorian age his place among the philosophers of force is *Latter-Day Pamphlets*. And we are indebted to Professor Grierson of Edinburgh for recalling us to ideas of this central work, as he calls it, in an accomplished essay which treats it for what it is, an important document of English Fascism.\*

Writing in 1850, and with, as he said, one only complete approver, his wife, Carlyle displayed himself in explosive revulsion from the nationalist uprisings of 1848. Those outbreaks were to him a revelation of democracy at its worst. He found them, as he wrote to Emerson, "disastrous withal," "horrible and even damnable." Carlyle had no understanding of the people's part in the stirrings of 1848; but he was the first in England to announce the bankruptcy of the political and economic theory which then held the field: " *Laissez-faire* on the part of the governing classes, we repeat again and again, will, with whatever difficulty, have to cease." It was a "Do-nothing guidance," and this is a Do-something world. And there was one point of exact prescience in Carlyle at this time. He saw the helplessness of

\* *Carlyle and Hitler*, by H. J. C. Grierson. Adamson Lecture. Cambridge University Press.

revolutionary nationalism and predicted the reinstatement of the autocrats. His forecast for Europe during the ensuing two generations was strikingly accurate. What he felt about his own country, in the matter of impending governmental change, had very little to do with the England of the nineteenth century, but he had a surprising prevision of Fascist Europe in its more serious aspects. He had nothing to say of the reform of Parliament: elective chambers in any case were irremediable. What he demanded was a remaking of the national executive. The one necessity he was positive about was the finding of a Prime Minister who should be the actual ruler of England, wielding all power. His scheme of social redemption was based upon "wise obedience and wise command"—in other words, the higher Fascism: "the regimenting of Pauper Banditti into Soldiers of Industry" as the beginning of a "blessed process," with a pioneer corps of "waste-land industrials" breaking ground for the disciplined soldier-workers of every other industry. Carlyle's ideal Prime Minister is made to announce the formation of a national industrial army into which the unemployed masses are to be drafted, and there is no dubiety in his method. The men will be recruited and they must obey. How is this to be done? The ruler tells them how. He will endeavour to persuade them. If they resist, he will coerce. If they are still recalcitrant, he will shoot. And here, as you see, except for the suggested English interval of persuasion, is the full programme of the Fascist and Nazi labour camps.

## FREEDOM AND THE STATE

The marks of civilization, we should all have said, were tolerance and variety, permitting the utmost development of local and regional freedom and group expression. And it was noticeable that in Germany more than in any other country the essentials of regional independence had been preserved. That was the charm and, as most people felt, the excellence of the older Germany. But the Germany which has adopted the totalitarian view of the State sees in variety nothing but disunity and weakness, and is convinced that uniformity alone makes national strength. This is the theory likewise of the North American people, and doubtless also of the new Russia. It is a theory which we cannot separate from States of continental extent, in an age of swift communications and mass production. If we could witness its establishment amid political and spiritual conditions which encourage freedom of conscience and a wholesome play of mind, we might watch the growth of such great systems with reasonable sympathy, and with a hope that they may work out towards a higher level of general well-being. But we are compelled at present to view them as examples of power politics, and revealing a spirit of coercion which leads us to infer that violence in the world of great States is at least as regular and pervasive as the fierce national and tribal passions of the little peoples.

We had come increasingly to believe that the healthy national communities are those in which the weight of central authority is least felt and in which there is the widest variety of group

organization; and many of us have been accustomed also to argue that when the Great Society is moving in that direction, the result must be an enlarging world influence as well as a rising level of social welfare. To thinkers of the Tawney school there is no contradiction between this conception of democratic self-discipline and the most complete form of socialized public services; but here comes in what is perhaps the most serious peril of the immediate future for countries which retain forms of democracy similar to our own. Obviously such countries are repugnant to the architects of the totalitarian State, and later developments in Europe tend to suggest the conclusion that a large growth of voluntary societies may make the triumph of a new despotism easier rather than more difficult. Republican Germany afforded an example. The German trade unions, co-operative societies, religious associations, and leagues of youth appeared to make a more impressive display of community organization than could be found elsewhere. It was natural to assume that they would be the firmest bulwarks against Government encroachment. They proved to be anything but that. Although it was probable that the German associations taken together embodied a larger area of common ground than that covered by the kindred organizations in Britain, they were able to make almost no effective resistance. They went down speedily before the Nazi Government. The totalitarian State made an end of them in a few days, and with a concentrated violence, shown in the treatment of the leaders, which,

from any reasonable standpoint, would have been vastly in excess of the occasion even if resistance had been offered.

#### THE DUCE EXPLAINS

Between the two main types of despotism there is no difference in respect of violence and its use. I have already quoted Lenin's saying: "Nothing is gained except by violence." "Fascism," said Mussolini in 1921, "is no longer liberation but tyranny." And later, a few months before the march on Rome: "We must have the courage to say that there is a Fascist violence which is sacrosanct," and to be distinguished from certain other kinds that this master of counter-revolution would denounce as merely petty persecution. The makers of revolution by violence accept as a first principle that at all costs the gains of revolution must be preserved. That is simple. It accounts for the intensity of the fear which sweeps over the revolutionary leaders whenever the danger of counter-revolution becomes serious, or when the extremists of the Right resort to assassination. But we should not expect the doctrine to be always crudely presented. Mussolini, for example, when a completed ten years of Fascismo had convinced him of its strength, wrote for the English-speaking world an exposition of the place of violence in his practical philosophy. There could, he suggested, be no disputing the necessity of violent action. But such action belonged to the first, unavoidable stage—the insurrection; that is, the overturning of a system that had been marked for destruction. In that necessary work there was no

alternative to violent action, and, moreover, the force requisite for the insurrection must be held in reserve until such time as the new Government deemed itself to be secure. But that moment, the Duce argued (being here not by any means in full accord with his own practice), should bring the end of violence as a policy. The Government must then proceed to the task of bringing all its opponents under discipline, and the first and most dangerous of such opponents were those who believed in violence for its own sake. Their help was most valuable for the insurrection; but their doctrine was itself subversive, and when security had been attained they must be dealt with in unequivocal fashion, lest at the first unfavourable turn they show themselves to be enemies of the new State. So far the Duce, obeying a natural impulse to find a reasoned defence of his own method, and at the same time to guard himself against the charge that Fascismo in success is no different from Fascismo under the stress of the first assault. It is, of course, only the confident dictator who would reason in this way; and, as we may see from the abundant evidence of Nazi Germany, the question of restricting and directing the violent groups, who refuse to acknowledge that a revolution is over, is a question not to be disposed of by the argument set forth by the Italian Dictator.

#### VIOLENCE AND EMPIRE

Mankind through the ages has never been in a position to conceive of Empire except in terms of force. The ideal ruler of legend almost invariably

presides over a little kingdom, and if at times the darkness of the imperial chronicles is illuminated by the figure of a mild and beneficent emperor, some Cyrus or Antonine, we may be sure that the personal story bears little or no resemblance to the power policy of the imperial system. The noblest of all Indian emperors was Asoka of the third century B.C., and he has left the blood-stained record of the Kalinga conquest, for which, we may surmise, he could not believe that any expiation was possible. And in the modern age empire in general has had one broad meaning : conquest and forcible "co-ordination," with, ever since the opening of Asia and South America by the great navigators, the enslavement and exploitation of native races by the conquering white man. Empire in Europe, however, it may be objected, should not in the later period be identified with methods of violence, but rather with the system of peace by power, the imposition of a rule so completely organized that active rebellion ceased to be thought of.

Violence, in truth, cannot be separated from the politics of Power. But we English, as is natural, are far too much inclined to overlook or explain away a fact that is universal and unalterable. And we are encouraged to do this, not only by the national habit of idealizing the British system, but also by the present-day insistence upon a genuine transition from empire to commonwealth. We need, however, to keep well in view certain matters of history and public opinion which are of great importance, and the more because, although we ourselves may be

aware of organic changes going forward in the British system, the world at large continues to judge us an empire, and not a commonwealth. I do not think we can be surprised at this continued use of the old word or the persistence of the old critical attitude. Self-governing dominions are young nations, with relatively small populations. They make only rare appearances in the headlines. It is the dependencies, mainly in Africa and Asia, that come into the news; and we may note incidentally that no empire except the British is allowed to appear on the front page. For reasons which are not difficult to understand untoward events in countries under the British flag do not go unreported, while the world is allowed to forget as a rule that France and Italy and the United States are imperial Powers.

#### BRITISH TEST CASES

During the present century two great divisions of the British system, South Africa and India, have in turn occupied a large space in the newspapers. Ireland was always there. The Boer War gave the first of these an important place; - home-staying English people have never understood how serious that unhappy conflict was in its wider results. The effect of the protracted failure in Ireland is something that will not pass from the world for a long time to come. Ireland, we must not forget, commands world-wide publicity; and critics of the British system have learned to link Ireland and India together as the most conspicuous examples of imperialist method. More than any other countries they stand for British

power politics, which at times, most tragically, have provided examples of violent repression. The collocation is of immense significance in relation to British influence in the world, as our Government found during the War and was forced to realize once again when Ireland was being ravaged by the Black and Tans and the Irish Republican Army. It is twelve years since the Irish Free State was formed and Ireland passed entirely into Irish hands. South Africa, we must believe, will compose its own difficulties. Egypt should find its place in a modernized Moslem world. But the greatest of all British problems will remain. India must furnish the crucial test of British rule; and if the methods of a continuing authority are to be justified before the world, we must at all costs avoid a repetition of any such unhappy occurrences as those of the past century, the memory of which an India still unappeased will not allow to die. From the terrific vengeance of the Mutiny to the guns of General Dyer at Amritsar the record makes a dark stain; nor can we refuse to see that the heavy hand of the police in the suppression of civil disobedience within the past three years has served to lengthen the account against the British Raj.

#### THE GANDHIST CHALLENGE

It is claimed by the authorities in India that the suppression of civil disobedience is a full administrative success, and it is argued that the character of the movement left the Government with no alternative. This is a deeply distressing and a

most instructive chapter of British rule in India, and I am sure that we make a mistake if we infer that, because of the results of the Willingdon policy, the last has been heard of the idea and method which the world associates with the name of M. K. Gandhi.

The Indian leader gave to his movement in its first stage a name that was doubly negative. Non-violent non-co-operation must be the strangest slogan ever devised for stirring the multitude to action. Mr. Gandhi's programme called for a social sacrifice which the educated classes of India could not make (since they are modern in spirit, not mediæval), while the tactics of the agitation demanded forms of mass action in which the provocation to violence could not be avoided. This was repeatedly proved by events, and as often acknowledged by Mr. Gandhi, with those painful searchings of heart that drove him time and again to the penitential fast.

Non-co-operation, it will be remembered, developed into mass civil disobedience, which, beginning with the salt march to the shores of Cambay, took its final form in the *hartals* of Bombay and the immense boycott demonstrations. Mr. Gandhi, I take it, would now confess to a triple miscalculation—as to the appeal of civil disobedience, as to the profound disunity of the Indian peoples, and as to the degree in which the Government of India is still prepared to employ methods of repression and the physical force of the police. Power, prestige, the fear of economic defeat, and the passion of colour prejudice—all these are involved: a combination

of instinct and motive which leaves only too little room for persuasion and the longer view.

The Mahatma has not retired from politics. He retains his advisory authority in the National Congress, which has this year determined to resume its constitutional activities and is no longer proscribed. And in the meantime Mr. Gandhi devotes himself to the relief of the multitude of sufferers from the earthquake in Behar—a service which no man could render as he can—and to the cause of the Untouchables.

The change in his position makes a striking contrast to the scene of five years ago, or ten, when the Gandhist challenge seemed to have brought the British power in India to a test that might prove, in a deep sense, decisive. Has Gandhism in the public life of India spent its force? I do not know that any observer of to-day can answer this question. We are all concerned to ask it, and at the same time to consider the virtual disappearance of the kindred movement in Russia. Our age has produced two extraordinary prophets of spiritual force as opposed to violence. Gandhi is the most potent of all popular leaders, for the mechanistic organization of the modern world which he condemns has made him universally known. The plan he proposed to his countrymen has been abandoned; it will not be tried again. Leo Tolstoy, from whom directly he took the idea, although Gandhi would not follow his Russian master in calling it non-resistance, was not a popular leader but a mighty mind. No scheme of his was ever tested on the plane of action, although in Tsarist Russia he was a great

influence. Go, however, to Russia to-day and seek for the disciples of Tolstoy, the believers in unfettered spiritual power. They exist, doubtless, and in numbers; but under the Soviets they are submerged.

#### THE PROBLEM IN AMERICA

We cannot review the imperial record of Britain in respect of violence without a troubled mind and conscience. Nor can any student of American affairs who confesses himself still an adherent of the democratic faith look upon the social scene of North America without being aware of a stupendous irony and contradiction. The United States is the oldest as it is the most extensive of modern systems of political democracy. The American Declaration and Constitution are the twin founts of democratic ideology and political practice; the Republic is by continuous affirmation the home of the free and the land of equal rights and opportunity. How, then, are we to explain the unlimited evidence, supplied from America itself through the constantly open channels of a stupendous publicity, of violence as a permanent element in American life?

Violence is endemic in the United States, and it is of bewildering variety. Perhaps it would not be an exaggeration to say that all the known roots of the evil are found in the American system. There is, first, the bitter root of race dominance and colour prejudice—a terrible legacy of African slavery, working out in ways that do not tend to lose any of their savagery as the Negroes, under the stimulus of incessantly

changing economic conditions and new racial aspirations born of their multiplying schools and colleges, spread out from the rural South into the industrial centres of the North and Middle West. The question of Afro-America stands alone. No other problem of American society approaches this one in difficulty or in the potentialities of hatred and violence. But there are occasions when it seems as though a mob madness almost equal to that of white against black can be produced without the introduction of the fury in which the coloured skin plays its part. The crime of kidnapping is at present an outstanding illustration. The kidnapper, it would seem, is usually a white man, and the recent incident at San José indicated that while this shocking evil continues to exist in America, lynch law for the kidnapper will lack nothing of the terror that hitherto has been associated only with the doing to death of the coloured man.

In the United States, again, there is the never-ceasing warfare between capital and labour. It has not been lessened by President Roosevelt's New Deal. On the contrary, the area of industrial strife has been greatly widened since the formation of the National Recovery Administration. The bitter conflict this spring in Ohio shows that there are employers who will resist the labour provisions of the N.R.A., despite the wording of the Recovery Act, as implacably as, during many years past, the mine-owners of Pennsylvania and other coal regions have resisted the miners' unions. And in the antagonism between capital and labour in America there is on both sides a practice

of reckless killing, against which the better elements have hitherto protested and struggled in vain.

These three features of America—the clash of colour, the kidnapper, and the disputed claims of labour—make, unhappily, only the beginning of a long catalogue of the causes or occasions of violence. The great country which, during a century of mass migration, opened its gates to distressed and ambitious emigrants from all the European lands, could not hope to escape racial and religious antagonisms, more especially in the huge polyglot cities where may sometimes be found communities of the foreign-born equalling the population of whole cities in the homelands. The United States, however, has now passed beyond its greatest difficulties with the immigrant citizen, for the migrant streams are stopped at the source. A rigorous quota system began the process, which has been completed by other than legislative means. The gates of what was once the land of promise are closed. The work of full assimilation is advancing, and it is reasonable to hope that in the course of one more generation the newer citizens of the Republic may be brought fully within the fold.

But yet, we may wonder, how can that be if the bases and conditions of American life are to remain in essentials as they have been and are? All Americans acknowledge the existence of a national tradition of lawlessness, extraordinarily strong and apparently running through the whole country. And as readily do Americans admit the deep essential anarchism of a country which,

with its once boundless vacant spaces, has gloried in the wildest of frontier traditions. From the pioneer settlements to the completed structure of industry and finance which trembled over the abyss in the winter of 1933-4, we have the unfolding spectacle of an acquisitive society on a scale never approached in the older world. How is it possible for this colossal body to be tamed and directed by a Franklin Roosevelt? And to what means can America look for release from the plague of lawlessness?

The spectacle of America raises, as I believe, and raises in the sharpest forms, nearly all the problems of violence in the Great Society. We see there the virulent poisons of race and creed, of power and greed, of repression and frustration; and we see also something that has in Britain been veiled by our regular habits, our respect for appearance and the dignity of public life and the careful restraint of our officers of the law—so long, that is, as the offender and the challenger are deemed to be no serious peril to the system. America has the tradition and habit of roughness—witness the common scenes of the moving pictures: the man-hunt, the shooting affray, the gang terror, and the corresponding brutality of the law. In no other country of the world are the root causes of violence so openly displayed. And in no other, I believe, can we deduce more clearly the nature of the steps that are necessary if the social body is to be freed of the poison. This subject, obviously, is not one to be glanced at in a paragraph. I pass from it with the bare expression of a fear and a

hope. The fear is, that under stress of the anarchic transition which would appear to be unavoidable as the limits of what may be possible under the Roosevelt policy are disclosed, the United States may be driven to the adoption of its own variant of Fascism. And the hope—held against what I confess to be a great weight of evidence—is that the most energetic and resourceful of modern peoples may be able, before it is too late, to discover and command the social agencies its own liberation.

#### MASS MURDER

Most terrible of all post-war developments is the recrudescence of massacre as an instrument in the hands of Governments, insurgent leaders, and political parties; for, as Professor Gilbert Murray puts it, murder has become almost a regular method of politics. Massacres in the course of revolution are inevitable. They always occur. We know they are to be expected in any complete revolution, even when by the greatest good fortune—as in Russia at the collapse of the Tsardom—the first upheaval is accomplished without a heavy sacrifice of life. In most revolutions the periods are plainly marked. History is an almost sure guide as to the stage of mass killing, and, as we know, under modern conditions the terror may be equal to the worst excesses of the past. At such times there is no possibility of restraint: the barbarian forces are rampant. On the part of an oppressed people they comprise inevitably, besides the fury of insurrection, the passion of vengeance with its roots in a race

memory of suffering inflicted through generations by the ruling class, while in the event of counter-revolution we have invariably the mingling of revenge and fear carried to the farthest limit. We cannot wonder at any manifestation, however excessive, that occurs in the tempest of revolution. It is, rather, in the systematic organization of a terror policy—the cold pogrom—that we see the darkest side of Europe in these days. In one European country after another the policy of extermination has been adopted and carried out. Since 1789 it had been assumed that a successful revolution means the destruction and not merely the overthrow of the ruling orders. Since 1917 the world has come to realize that a proletarian revolution involves also the elimination, as a class, of the bourgeoisie—a range of social destruction never before attempted or envisaged. And in Russia, where the Soviet system is identified with the urban and industrial power, the revolution could not be completed without war upon the farmers—or, in the accepted phrase, the liquidation of the *Kulak* class.

That, however, is revolution itself, the complete overturn of an old society, and we know it to be impossible without a policy of mass slaughter, an incalculable harvest of death. The continuing horror of Europe, however, is of another kind. Not the fire of revolution but the frigid cult of hatred explains the extermination of national and racial minorities—in the Ukraine and Galicia, in Hungary and the Balkans, as in the policy, so frankly and steadily avowed, of the Nazi Government in Germany.

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ROOTS

The pathological origins of violence make an irresistible area of speculation for the psychologists, and particularly for those who take all their clues to the behaviour of individuals and communities from the masters of Vienna. I have no competence in this field, and can claim little acquaintance with the literature of psychological interpretation that has been called forth by the developments of Fascism and Nazism. I make, therefore, no apology for giving the substance of an admirable piece of exposition by Professor William Orton, of Smith College, Massachusetts.\* He is dealing especially with mass cruelty in the form of perversion, of which our age has produced so many affrighting examples.

Collective cruelty in which there is a manifest element of this kind, systematically practised and sanctioned by influential groups, Professor Orton describes as a specific phenomenon of our distracted epoch. It involves as a rule co-operation in the torture of a victim already overpowered. But he is mistaken, I suggest, in regarding this as new. It is the central horror of lynching, and it seems to be associated with every outbreak of group or mob fury that is provoked by race and colour passion. Professor Orton's principal point, however, is incontrovertible. The forms of special barbarity that we find in the Fascist and Nazi movements, he observes, are to be explained first of all as phenomena of the great depression in which the bourgeoisie of Europe has been

\* *The Spread of Sadism*, in the *New Republic*, New York, May 16th, 1934.

involved: the outcome, that is to say, of adverse economic conditions, so severe and protracted that misery and frustration are produced to an unexampled degree. For some fifteen years the young people of all countries possessing a large middle-class population have been forced to realize that youth confronts a world of enormous difficulty. Until recently the capitalist order could claim to be at least relatively successful in that it ensured places for nearly all young men and women, with the prospect of a livelihood and emotional fulfilment in family life and normal social surroundings. But it is here that the devastations of war and its *sequelæ* are most apparent, hitting especially the young people who are entering on adult life with the beginnings of knowledge and some measure of special training. In a time of painful transition the places open to them are lamentably few. The avenues of work and wholesome recreation are dangerously closed. The obstacles to marriage grow more numerous and intractable. This is true of England; it is distressingly true of North America, while as to Central Europe we have to recognize that the social facts are extraordinarily disturbing. There is no difficulty in understanding why Fascist and Nazi leaders should lay such tremendous insistence upon marriage and paternity, or why they should, often enough without concrete evidence, reiterate the promise that the counter-revolution is to mean work and opportunity for the young man, and marriage and a home for the young woman.

There are other points in Professor Orton's serviceable analysis. He notes that the sense of

humiliation in a beaten and despised nation has grave consequences for the individual, since the connection between the citizen and the national entity is an organic reality. And he reminds us of Dr. Alfred Adler's well-known thesis—that normal social relations subsist only at the cost of exacting adjustments made from day to day by every member of a community. Society confers, or should confer, essential satisfactions upon its members; but in a time of wide upheaval, of resurgent fear, of general insecurity attacking all who are on the threshold of maturity, how is it possible for the social body to escape spiritual confusion and misery? Or how can we expect youth to have the strength and the balance to resist the appeal of an Adolf Hitler?

#### FRUSTRATION AND MONOTONY

Our own experience of war led us in some degree to realize the extent of the subconscious revolt against society and its oppressive controls. These impose upon the entire body of town-dwellers a regular, humdrum, conventional mode of living, the burden of which the ordinary citizen does not feel in normal times, mainly perhaps because the struggle for existence is balanced by a just-tolerable round of daily duty and a little reward in the shape of recreation and natural affection. The pressure of the social system is such that men and women generally go through with the common task without more than an occasional suspicion that life is more than meat and the body than raiment, until—as in our time and in all parts of the world—they are

brought up against some shattering experience. War or revolution liberates of necessity all the primitive passions; but it is probably true that for most people the most noteworthy psychological discovery of war-time was that the citizen-soldier so often confessed to a strong feeling of enjoyment and satisfaction in the life of camp and battle-field. On the one side, of course, it was the exchange of controls, from ordinary toil with anxiety to obedience and irresponsibility. On the other side it was comradeship, heightened by the sense of common danger.

It is easy to realize what happens, especially to the hordes of young men during a period of anarchic peace, harassed by the monotony of unemployment or the misery of uncongenial labour. They are ready enough to respond to any gospel; they are ripe for the sickle of a new leader, if only he gives them hope, promises work, and points to immediate adventure. In England we may continue to be surprised that a call of this sort should be effective, but there is no difficulty whatever in understanding the appeal of Adolf Hitler to German youth. In a land of despair the man of impassioned purpose is accepted as the deliverer; and, as Mr. Brailsford says, youth "rushes into party militias which cherish violence as an inspiration."

#### ANTI-SEMITISM

The passion of Anti-Semitism calls for a special explanation. The feeling is traditional in Germany, and there is no denying that some of the greatest Germans have exhibited it, notably Luther and

Goethe. Luther's hatred of the Jews is easy to understand. Goethe's hostility has a particular interest for our time. One does not expect to find in the greatest of German humanists any opinion or feeling at all making a link with Hitler: but, as a matter of fact, what in Hitler is a wholly irrational instinct Goethe explains in philosophical terms, and his reason runs parallel with Hitler's instinct. He was against the Jews as Hitler is, because he looked upon them as racially and culturally alien, and Jewry as a foreign body which would never be assimilated into German conceptions and the German way of life. Anti-Semitism is an awful and seemingly everlasting thing in Europe. It has always been there. No prejudice in the history of mankind, apart from the instincts of race hatred which include the fear of colour, has been so savage and unvarying as this. And in modern Germany it is carried to new lengths, being expressed in the most loathsome terms, and given effect to in the most cruel policy since the expulsion from Spain.

The Nazis speak of two economic and social factors connected with the place of the Jews in Germany since the War. The first is the invasion of many thousands of poor Jews from the ghettos of Eastern Europe as the Russian armies drove forward—hordes of homeless people who crossed the frontier while it was still possible for Germany to be considered a land of refuge. There is no possibility of computing the number of these Jewish refugees, but there is a likelihood, in view of the census figures, that the total has

been greatly exaggerated in Nazi propaganda. The second reason is one upon which heavy stress has been laid by the Nazi leaders and their followers in every defence of the persecution policy. It is the remarkable advance during the past twenty years of the Jew in business and the professions as well as, until the coming of the Nazis, in government service.

#### THE JEW IN GERMANY

The principal facts here are not disputed; nor, so far as I know, is the explanation. For many centuries the great cities of Northern Germany have contained Jewish communities, built up by business and professional families whose contribution to the intellectual and artistic life of the country has been of high value. Kept outside the barriers of the aristocratic and administrative world, outside the Army and all the privileged services, down to the break-up of the Empire, their men of ability, admittedly more numerous relatively than the abler men in the general population, necessarily made their way in commerce and in the learned professions, while in cities such as Hamburg and Frankfurt the Jewish families formed a compact and influential unit, strong enough to command their own lives without being seriously troubled by the prejudices of the higher German world. With the fall of the Empire the situation underwent an extraordinary change. All doors were opened to men of Jewish birth. Always and in every land gifted beyond the common in acquiring knowledge and mastering examination tests, they made

their conquering way into every department of professional life. Here, again, exaggeration has entered into the Anti-Semitic case, sometimes exaggeration of a grotesque kind; but it is an acknowledged fact that the number of Jews occupying posts in medicine and the law, in the public services and the universities, was during the Republic greatly in excess of the Jewish percentage of the population.

That, of course, is not a fact to the discredit of the Jewish community. It is very much otherwise, since we must assume that in a country enjoying for the first time in its history something like equality of opportunity, success in the open field must as a general rule be attributed to industry and mental distinction. But republican Germany was a land of economic and spiritual sickness. The people were extraordinarily distracted, harassed, disillusioned. As the Republic moved towards disaster stimulus was applied to every bitter and destructive feeling. The Nationalist and Nazi propaganda was developed and intensified; into it went an indescribable amalgam of false tradition, hatred, invention, superstition; and, as it happened, the leader of National Socialism is an extreme victim of his party's propaganda. Herr Hitler reveals himself in his autobiography, *Mein Kampf*, as a man capable of combining national and social theories that do not count as heresies to-day with some superstitions that can be described only as outrageous violations of knowledge and reason. His Anti-Semitism is the most cruel and shocking of these. We may admit, I think, that since attaining supreme

responsibility, Herr Hitler has made a definite modification in his policy and has used his influence to restrain the more savage of the Anti-Semites. But restraint at this late stage can be of little practical effect upon the mass feeling. The crushing of the German Jewish community was decreed and is proceeding. Sentence of economic extermination has been passed upon them. They cannot escape from Germany. There are no permits available for them, and there remain on the earth to-day almost no countries of refuge.

#### THE NEW VIOLENCE IN ENGLAND

The sudden appearance of violence in English politics, in the form of organized physical attack practised by uniformed crusaders, has within the past few months made a practical issue for British citizens, who find themselves without experience for dealing with it. We have followed our habitual course of taking things for granted, accepting the usual without examination, and comforting ourselves with the assurance that free speech is an institution, and tolerance in political matters so ingrained in the national character that this country is safe from the dangers to which continental nations have succumbed. In assuming such things we are forgetting the important fact that the relative freedom of assembly and discussion which we enjoy goes back only a few generations, and that even so it is subject to restrictions, often serious, which are modified in practice according to the gradual or imperceptible movements of public feeling. I myself, for example, can remember a time when, as regards

certain topics, there was a good deal more latitude permitted to platform agitators and minority organs than exists to-day. The winning of the right of free discussion, and of association, was not achieved in England until the Victorian period. The Chartist agitation, provoked by popular disappointment with the Reform Act of 1832, was maintained against extreme severity from the authorities. The sufferings of the Tolpuddle martyrs, in the cause of the simplest form of workers' union, befell only a century ago. And there are those among us who can speak from experiences of quite recent memory which illustrate the limits within which personal and collective activity is confined by the laws of England. The case of Tom Mann in 1933 made known the fact that the Government of the day could still resort to the old law of preventive arrest, and agitators of the Left have always complained that the rules as to the rights and usages of public assembly were not upheld with strictness or even decent fairness, when they were concerned. There is another and a closer parallel to the kinds of violence which, by reason of the British Fascists, our Press and public are at present discussing as a new outbreak of barbarism in England. I mean the experiences of the militant suffragists who, twenty years ago, worked out a technique of interruption at public meetings. There were no incidents in that movement which, in actual physical content, could be set alongside those reported in London since the large Fascist demonstrations began. But it is important to remember that in the earlier

movement the handling of women interrupters was exceedingly harsh, and that it became more violent as, amid protests from the general public, the movement made headway.

Our people are disturbed over these manifestations and greatly perplexed. They are puzzled especially by the seeming absence of justification for Fascist tactics in this country. Why this drilled force of uniformed men for the expulsion of interrupters? English speakers are accustomed to interrupters. A political orator makes his reputation in no small degree by the skill and humour he displays in handling them. No powerful speaker of our time has been without this gift; and it is certainly true that hitherto no public man in Britain has made a position for himself by refusing to treat with objectors in public assembly. And why this un-English resort to physical ill-treatment, directed ostensibly against "the Reds" but plainly intended as a deterrent to all other opponents? Mr. Baldwin is right in expressing his anxiety and in affirming that these things reveal a spirit completely alien to the Englishman.

And yet, ought we to be surprised by the revelation of the spirit of violence as latent in England, and occasionally breaking out in frightfulness, at remote points of the Empire? The British lion is not a symbol of Peace and reason. There is a glaring contradiction between the formal religion of Britain and the race ethics of these islands. Consider especially the temper and behaviour in which, during many centuries, our privileged families have been drilled. No

ruling class in Europe has been more deeply indoctrinated with the idea of divine right. In no country was the division between the two nations, of rulers and ruled, more thoroughly upheld, at any rate until the emergence of political and industrial democracy. Nor can we fail to note the significance of two traditional practices to which the leisured classes of England have clung with singular tenacity—their carefully varied blood sports and the routine of corporal punishment in the schools: habits which make a curious contrast to the ideal of humaneness and generosity which, as foreigner observers are quick to note, has been relatively conspicuous in the English gentleman. You cannot inculcate the divine right of dominance with the aid of the birch without producing an accordant result (it is salutary in this connection to recall Gerald Gould's satiric ballad of Mullins-Wyse and his bride, who "were pure in heart and sparing of words, They chased little beasts and shot little birds"). Nor can we, who have far more light than our precursors possessed as to the bearing of early training and family tradition on adult behaviour, close our eyes to the significance of school and playground influences in the shaping of young Britons for the imperial services.

#### THESE MAD NATIONALISMS

Liberal orthodoxy in the nineteenth century included a general belief that autocratic empires were built on force and that freedom was, or should be, enshrined in all democratic nationalities. We cannot tell to-day how far the earlier

hopes might have been fulfilled, because the men of 1830 and 1848 met with complete disaster. We can say, however, that the nineteenth century made a lamentable failure over one task that was peculiarly its own—the task of finding a right relation between the small nation and the great State; and we can see to how disastrous an extent the unresolved problem of nationality made for misery and further ruin after the World War. Among the many problems passed on from the last century to our own there is not one that is more baffling than this, nor one more fearfully bedevilled by hatred and fear.

The mad nationalisms of Europe are terrifying in themselves, and they stand as a formidable difficulty for those dogmatists who uphold against all evidence the full economic interpretation of history. In the age of the expanding empires this famous doctrine may have seemed wellnigh unanswerable; but what should be said for it now? The correct answer, in my judgment, is suggested by, among others, Mr. Aldous Huxley, in a brilliant chapter of his latest travel book:

The truth is that our so-called wars of interest are really wars of passion, like those of Central America. To find a war of pure interest one must go far afield. . . . Interests are always ready to compound, passions never. You can always discuss figures, haggle over prices, ask 100 and accept 85. But you cannot discuss hatred, nor haggle over contradictory vanities and prejudices, nor ask for blood and accept a soft answer.\*

\* *Beyond the Mexique Bay*. By Aldous Huxley. Chatto and Windus, 1934.

That, surely is true. And we must look for the immediate causes in the flood of false doctrine, in perverted patriotism and tribal honour, the mutual ferocity of neighbours hating across a frontier, the persistent drilling of every new generation, with the aid of all the arts, in the duty of hate and the honour of lying. Nationalism, we are often told, is the new religion. The Hitlers and Mussolinis are resolved to make it so, and as they proclaim its dogmas they appear to be driving their followers to a demonstration that man under these newest disciples is a monster of cruelty like unto all his ancestors. The mystery of cruelty is a far harder puzzle than the mystery of pain, or than the mystery of what we usually mean by moral failure or corruption. Man is not wholly a beast of prey. But mankind displays itself still, in all climes and colours, as the cruellest animal in Nature; and, says Henry Nevinson, whose compassionate eye has looked upon the ragings of the human animal in all continents, it is only in a few peoples of our time that the appetite for inflicting suffering has been in some small measure appeased.

#### THE FAITH WE HOLD

I have touched only upon a few aspects, and those the most easily discussed, of the phenomena of violence in our civilization. It cannot, I think, be said that I have overstated the facts. It certainly will not be thought that I have laid too much emphasis upon those features and tendencies in our own country or the lands nearest to us in tradition that might appear to imply a

danger similar in kind to that of continental Europe. We seem, as Thomas Hardy warned us ten years ago, to be in peril of a new Dark Age. It is the conviction of all of us here that, whatever has befallen or may befall, "the powers of this dark world" can make no difference to those final realities which, since they cannot be shaken, must remain. I have gone for a closing word to a brilliant elder contemporary of ours who is not always looked upon as an ally of those who meet in this place. Mr. Bernard Shaw, in the preface to a play of last year,\* surprised his readers by printing in drama a scene of Jesus before Pilate. The conversation is all between the Christ and the Procurator, and at the culminating point we have this speech:

The beast of prey is not striving to return: the kingdom of God is striving to come. The empire that looks back in terror shall give way to the kingdom that looks forward with hope. Terror drives men mad; hope and faith give them divine wisdom. The men whom you fill with fear will stick at no evil and perish in their sin; the men whom I fill with faith shall inherit the earth. I say to you, Cast out fear. Speak no more vain things to me about the greatness of Rome. The greatness of Rome, as you call it, is nothing but fear: fear of the past and fear of the future, fear of the poor and fear of the rich, fear of the High Priests, fear of the Jews and Greeks who are learned, fear of the Gauls and Goths and Huns who are barbarians, fear of the Carthage you destroyed to save you from your fear of it and now fear worse than ever, fear of imperial Cæsar, the idol you have yourself created, and fear

\* *On The Rocks.*

of me, the penniless vagrant, buffeted and mocked, fear of everything except the rule of God: faith in nothing but blood and iron and gold. You, standing for Rome, are the universal coward; I, standing for the kingdom of God, have braved everything, lost everything, and won an eternal crown.

